



Safety tips

Trails are uneven; please use at your own risk.

While hiking the trail you may encounter animals indigenous of this area. Please observe from a safe distance, and remember you are in their habitat.

For your own safety:

- Please remain on the trails.
- Carry an adequate amount of drinking water. There is no potable water on site.
- In case of lightning, seek a low area away from trees, fence lines and tall objects.
- In case of emergency, call 911.
- This site is located between Michigan Street and Indrio Road off of Old Dixie Highway, Fort Pierce.

Funding for the acquisition of this site was provided by Florida Communities Trust's Preservation 2000 Program and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

D.J. Wilcox Natural Area



D.J. Wilcox Natural Area is a 106 acre site adjacent to the Indian River Lagoon.

A 30 minute walk will lead you along an interpretive trail and take you through several different ecosystems.








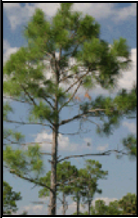


**Environmental
Resources Department**




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<p>1. Myrsine <i>(Rapanea punctata)</i></p> <p>Myrsine, a plant of hardwood hammocks and swamp areas, has thick, leathery leaves. The small flowers and berries along the stems distinguish it from the very similar looking Marberry. The dark blue to black fruits it produces are highly prized by birds.</p>	
<p>2. Swamp Fern <i>(Blechnum serrulatum)</i></p> <p>This is the only species of <i>Blechnum</i> that occurs in Florida. Usually a common understory plant of the hydric hammock, this fern can also be found in wetter marshes and prairies. The species name <i>serrulatum</i>, refers to the serrated edge of the leaves.</p>	
<p>3. Bracken fern <i>(Pteridium aquilinum)</i></p> <p>This species can be easily identified by its large triangular fronds that are divided into three main parts. This fern was used as currency in the Middle Ages, and the fiddleheads and rhizomes were eaten by early peoples around the country.</p>	
<p>4. Sand Live Oak <i>(Quercus geminata)</i></p> <p>The species name of this tree, <i>geminata</i>, means “twins” and refers to the paired acorns of the tree. It is very similar to Live Oak, but grows on drier, more sandy sites where it is exposed to intense sun exposure and limited water availability. As a result, it grows shorter than Live Oak. The thick, waxy leaves are also distinctly more curled under at the margins, which are adaptations to conserve water.</p>	
<p>5. Saw Palmetto <i>(Serenoa repens)</i></p> <p>This shrub comprises the majority of the understory in pine flatwoods ecosystems. The stem usually grows horizontal to or under the ground, but occasionally will grow more upright. Named for the saw-like teeth along its stem, it, like the Sand Live Oak, has adapted to live in a sometimes harsh environment. In addition to having thick, waxy leaves, the vertical growth of the leaves allows for less exposure to the hot noontime sun.</p>	

<p>The fibrous trunk helps protect it from fire, and is one of the first plants to sprout back just days afterwards. This is an important plant to Florida’s wildlife. Bear, deer, raccoons, opossums, foxes, gopher tortoises and birds eat the berries it produces. Mammals including panther, bear and deer birth their young under its cover, and many birds use the fibers for nesting material. The berries are also valuable to humans for medicinal purposes.</p>	
<p>6. Wax Myrtle <i>(Myrica cerifera)</i></p> <p>The leaves of this plant are aromatic when crushed, and were used by early native peoples and pioneers as a natural insect repellant. Wax from the berries was also used to make candles and soap. The fruits of this plant is very important to native birds, especially wintering warblers and other migrants. These fruits enable Yellow-rumped Warblers, a mostly insectivorous species, to migrate earlier in the spring and later in the fall than other warblers. It is thought that these warblers are thought to be one of the few vertebrates that can digest wax, a major constituent of the berries. This plant also provides excellent bird nesting habitat and is a good choice for attracting birds to backyards.</p>	 
<p>7. Chapman Oak <i>(Quercus chapmanii)</i></p> <p>Chapman Oak is one of a few species of oaks considered “scrub” oaks as it grows in sandy, well-drained soils of scrubby ecosystems. Like other plants of habitats that experience high sun exposure and well drained soils, growth of scrub oaks is stunted to conserve water. Similar in appearance to the Myrtle Oak, another scrub oak, this species can be distinguished by its obovate to oblong leaves with wavy margins. Deer, turkeys, raccoons, squirrels and the threatened Florida Scrub-Jay feed on the acorns of these oaks, and their branches provide nesting habitat for a number of bird species.</p>	
<p>8. Shiny Lyonia <i>(Lyonia lucida)</i></p> <p>Also known as “fetterbush”, this plant has smooth, thick leaves and pink, bell shaped flowers that are attractive to insects. This showy plant is a good choice for native plant landscaping.</p>	

<p>9. Swamp Bay <i>(Persea palustris)</i></p> <p>Like other Bays, the leaves of this species are aromatic when crushed and have been used to flavor foods. This species can be differentiated by the similar Red Bay by the presence of rusty hairs along the midrib on the underside of the leaf and along the stems. Galls, swollen structures created by insects for food and brooding purposes, are often present on Bays. Along with the Red Bay, the leaves of this plant are eaten by the Palamedes and Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillars. It is thought that this species might be susceptible to a fungus carried by the Redbay Ambrosia Beetle introduced from Asia that is damaging the Red Bay.</p>	
<p>10. S. FL Slash Pine <i>(Pinus elliotii var. densa)</i></p> <p>The dominant canopy tree in pine flatwoods ecosystems, this variety of the Slash Pine is adapted to living in this region and also adapted to fire, a natural disturbance that keeps this ecosystem in check. The old trees on this site suffered greatly from the hurricanes of recent years, but these dead trees, or snags, are still valuable to wildlife such as woodpeckers for food and nesting habitat. These pines are also valuable to people; Slash Pine is named for the slashes created when resins were extracted to create turpentine. Early cultures ate the inner bark, seeds and needles, sap was used as a salve and an adhesive, and the wood was used, just like today, to create a variety of products.</p>	
<p>11. Shiny Blueberry <i>(Vaccinium myrsinites)</i></p> <p>Shiny Blueberry is a common groundcover in pine flatwoods. It is easily identified by its small, glossy evergreen leaves and small bell-shaped flowers. Small berries produced by this plant are valuable to wildlife and edible to humans.</p>	
<p>12. Loblolly Bay <i>(Gordonia lasianthus)</i></p> <p>The ‘bay’ portion of this common name is misleading, as this tree species is a member of the Tea family. As such, the leaves of this tree are not aromatic. It is often found growing along Sweetbay, a member of the Magnolia family. The bark of this species was once used for tanning leather.</p>	

<p>13. Live Oak <i>(Quercus virginiana)</i></p> <p>Common in hydric hammock ecosystems, this species is named for its longevity, reaching upwards of 300 years old. It is slow growing, with about a 1.5 inch growth in circumference each year. Trees have been reported with a branch spread of more than 150 feet and a trunk of 30 ft. or more. The acorns produced by these trees provide food for squirrels and birds, and also helped to sustain early peoples. Its strong wood was a vital part of wooden ship construction. It was reported that by 1832, almost all merchantable live oak within hauling distance had been cut to build ships.</p>	
<p>14. Dahoon Holly <i>(Ilex cassine)</i></p> <p>Dahoon holly is a small tree that prefers wetter areas bordering marshes and swamps. It has a narrow growth habit of upward pointing branches. An evergreen species, it is easily distinguished by the leaves that have smooth margins with just a few small sharp teeth and a sharp bristle at the tip. This species is dioecious, meaning there are separate male and female trees. Female trees like this one are the ones that possess red berries, which are eaten by many songbirds.</p>	
<p>15. Myrtle Oak <i>(Quercus myrtifolia)</i></p> <p>Myrtle Oak, another scrub oak, can be differentiated from the Chapman Oak by its oval to oblong shaped leaves that are thicker and waxier. The leaf margins are smooth (not wavy) and are also revolute, or turned downwards, to allow for even greater water retention.</p>	
<p>16. Sabal / Cabbage Palm <i>(Sabal palmetto)</i></p> <p>Our state tree can be found in several ecosystems including upland habitats such as hammocks and flatwoods, but also can grow in swamps, marshes and wet prairie due to its high water tolerance. You might be able to see a difference in the trunk among individual trees. Some trees have a smooth trunk, while others still possess boot jacks, or frond bases. As the tree matures, these jacks drop off, leaving the tree with a smooth trunk. The edible bud, called the “heart” of the palm, is considered a delicacy and has sustained many early settlers. Although harvesting it kills the tree, it is still consumed today.</p>	